

# As the Publishers See It

WITH the idea of getting the impressions of the publishers about the books of the past year the book section of THE NEW YORK HERALD sent out letters embodying the following questions: 1. What novel in your 1921 list enjoyed the greatest degree of popularity? 2. What work of non-fiction in your 1921 list enjoyed the greatest degree of popularity? 3. Outside of your own list, what (a) novel would you like best to have published? (b) what work of non-fiction would you like best to have published? 4. Is there in your list any book that the reading public seems to have unfairly neglected when its merits are considered? 5. Was there in your 1921 list any book that stands out in the light of a particularly interesting discovery? 6. In your opinion is the new writer holding his own with the writer whose reputation was established before the war?

Any comment seems unnecessary. We shall let the publishers speak for themselves in the following letters:

## Boni and Liveright.

IT may seem preposterous that publishers should fail to know what novel in 1921 outside of those on their own list they would have liked best to have published. In regard to non-fiction works other than our own, we would rather have published Havelock Ellis's "Impressions and Comments" than any other book in this classification.

Rose Macaulay's "Dangerous Ages" in actual copies sold enjoyed the greatest degree of popularity of any novel on our 1921 list, although the sale of this same author's "Potterism," which was published in September of 1920 and suffered from the handicap of almost four months previous sales, sold almost as many copies in the last year. Konrad Bercovici's "Ghitzia and Eight Other Romances of Gypsy Blood," although it was generously and even enthusiastically received by practically all of the literary critics of the country, was strangely neglected by the book reading public, its sales only reaching about 2,200 copies.

By far the most popular of our non-fiction books last year, and this year, too, is Hendrik Van Loon's "Story of Mankind." And it is unlikely that any book on our list will seriously dispute this position until Mr. Van Loon's "The Story of the Bible" is published by us in 1923.

The new writer, or, if not technically the new writer, the author, whose books have failed to win popularity before the war, is unquestionably more than holding his own with the old favorites, the mere announcement of whose works previously meant huge printings.

## Cosmopolitan Book Corporation.

HERE'S our reaction to your numerical list:

1. "The Flaming Forest," by James Oliver Curwood, is still the leader of our 1921 list, though it is closely pursued by Peter B. Kyne's "The Pride of Palomar."

2. "God's Country—The Trail to Happiness," by Curwood, was our most popular book of non-fiction in 1921.

3. (a) "If Winter Comes" by all means (and we imagine that is not a very original reply!).

(b) Oh, "Queen Victoria" or "The Outline of History," though there'd have been more fun in publishing "The Cruise of the Kawa."

4. Thank heavens—No.

5. No, unless it is considered that "The Go-Getter," a little book by Peter B. Kyne, published late in the year, has shed new light on the extent to which the average business man is interested in fiction. It's strictly a business story without any trace of a woman in it, and which has already sold nearly 75,000 copies.

6. Emphatically yes, as regards the new writer's holding his own. In fact, it seems to us that the established writers who have succeeded in holding on are those who have been able to display an entirely new brand of virility and strength since the war. It seems to have obliterated a lot and to have revived the hardshelled dictum that "Ye must be born again."

## George H. Doran Company.

ANSWERING your inquiries in the order of your list, our responses are as follows:

1. "The Young Enchanted," by Hugh Walpole.

2. "Parody Outline of History," by Donald Ogden Stewart.

3. We should hardly care to vote on these two points.

4. "The Pilgrim of the Smile," by Norman Davey, did not, it seems to me, receive anything like the support from discriminating readers which it deserved. Davey's new book, "Guinea Girl," just about to be published, will probably retrieve some of this lost ground, as it has more popular elements. As a piece of writing, however, it is not better than the "Pilgrim of the Smile."

5. "Three Soldiers," by John Dos Passos.

6. The opportunity for the new writer is better to-day than it has ever been. There has never been a

time in American book publishing when the work of the writer without established reputation was more eagerly watched or accorded a more enthusiastic reception.

## Dodd, Mead and Company.

ANSWERING your questionnaire of April 3:

1. "Manslaughter," by Alice Duer Miller, went into seven printings, and is still selling.

2. "Fabre's Book of Insects."

3. (a) "If Winter Comes" (b) "The Outline of History," by Wells.

Why do you arouse these covetous feelings on the part of publishers?

4. "In the Eyes of the East," by Marjorie Greenbie.

5. Can't think of any.

6. It seems to us that the new writer has just as good a chance as ever before in competition with those whose reputation has already been established. In fact, the most successful novelists of the last two years, in the opinion of the undersigned, are either new writers or those whose reputation was not very widely known until recently.

## Harcourt, Brace and Company.

OF course Sinclair Lewis's "Main Street," published in October, 1920, overshadowed not only most of the books which we published in 1921 but most of the novels which any one published in 1921. Its sales during 1921 were approximately 300,000 copies, and it led the best selling list of the year. But in March we published Dorothy Canfield's "The Brimming Cup," which trebled the sale of her previous novel, "The Bent Twig," and was second in the best selling list for the year.

2. Lytton Strachey's "Queen Victoria" far exceeded any other non-fiction book on our list in popularity, and, in fact, the sale of 50,000 copies of this biography since June, 1921, seems to us to be a clear indication of an unusually wide market in this country for non-fiction books of outstanding quality. We have come to the conclusion that "Queen Victoria" will turn out to be a classic. At any rate, the sales this year show little if any slackening.

3. It is hard to get agreement on this subject, but we should have been especially proud to have published Booth Tarkington's "Alice Adams" and Van Loon's "The Story of Mankind."

4. We have been surprised that Conal O'Riordan's "Adam of Dublin" and "Adam and Caroline" have not made more of a stir.

5. We will mention Elinor Wylie's "Nets to Catch the Wind."

6. Most certainly; the young American author is a little more than holding his own with the young British author.

## Harper and Brothers.

ANSWERING your letter of April 3, in reply to your first two questions we would say that Zane Grey's "To the Last Man" enjoyed the greatest degree of popularity.

Our best selling non-fiction book was "The Mind in the Making," which has been on all lists of best sellers for several weeks.

Regarding the other questions; while we should like to answer them, it is extremely difficult to do so, as in our opinion it would be treading on dangerous grounds. Won't you please, therefore, excuse us if we don't reply to them?

## Henry Holt and Company.

IT will be interesting, we think, to see the responses from various publishers in reply to your questionnaire concerning the general situation and popularity of the different books brought out during the publishing year of 1921. We do not intend to digress in answering your six questions any more than we have to, but we shall hope to see in the answers of other publishers a reflection of their attitude and sympathy toward the present trend in literature. Perhaps from their viewpoint rather than from the authors' own something of a forecast may be seen as to the type of books that may prove most acceptable during this year. It will

be worth noting, too, whether the publishers themselves seem to be in sympathy with the present tendency toward the public's desire for extreme realism in fiction and for the "modernist's point of view."

In answering your first question we are glad to say that young Stephen Vincent Benet's "The Beginning of Wisdom" enjoyed the greatest popularity among our autumn novels, and we think this fact may be taken as a good omen toward the reading public's present point of view. They knew that Benet had written previously, that he had shared with Carl Sandburg the Poetry Society's prize of the year, and they looked with sympathetic expectancy toward his first move. Its popularity and wide sale for a first novel shows at least that people who read are well informed as to what is going on in the book world, its heavy sale on publication proving that our publicity had aroused interest in this first effort of a young novelist. Its continued sale proves that readers welcome a sensitive reaction to the beauty of life, as well as to its drabness. It has been said that the "trouble with the younger generation is that they are not generating enough," but we are glad to say that we will publish this fall Benet's second novel.

Robert Benchley's "Of All Things" has been our best seller among the works of non-fiction. It is a book of humor from cover to cover, and the fact that it has been printed six times and goes to press again shortly indicates that when anybody has something to say there are plenty of jolly folks still in the world to appreciate it.

We think all publishers would say that they would rather have brought out "If Winter Comes" than any other novel, and in view of the present high cost of manufacturing you must not blame us in thinking that to bring out a best seller of such particular merit would be a great pleasure from all angles. We think that "The Mirrors of Washington" would be our choice of the works of non-fiction which we should most enjoy publishing. Putnam's published it in the realization that the public "outside of regular book circles" is interested in reading about people and matters of current political interest. Its merited success shows that despite the many criticisms that have been heaped upon us from outside in regard to our lethargy to public affairs we as Americans are still interested in the people who carry on these public affairs and we want to hear about them from authoritative sources.

You ask if there is any book on our list that the reading public seems to have neglected. "Clerambault," by Romain Rolland, was an out-and-out war book, reflecting the reactions of a highly spiritual personality to the error of war and its consequences. This book was published last spring and appeared at a time when all of us were out of sympathy with books concerning the war—a very natural reaction. This fact was evident in the early sale of the book, which was slow; but as people read it and realized that its pacifism was not directed against any countries in particular but was urged by an unbiased mind as the only solution of our great world problems, then the public began to read the book. Its sale at present is increasing and seems likely to go on steadily for a long time to come. It is interesting to note of this book that one of the Chicago reviewers hoped that "Rolland's great message would be translated into every tongue and become a part of the convictions of men everywhere." When a reviewer of undoubted authority speaks of a book in this manner the public cannot afford to neglect it.

We published, last spring, a little book of folk lore called "How and Why Stories," by John C. Branner, president emeritus of Leland Stanford University. We feel that this little book can be looked upon in the light of a real discovery, as it tells us the stories of the creation of the animals and man from the point of view of the old negro "aunts" and "uncles" that helped, in their whimsical way, to bring up Mr. Branner when he lived on a plantation in the old South "fo de wah." These simple tales express the childlike, trusting religion of the typical plantation dandy as well as his vivid imagination and humor.

We feel that at present the new writers, in particular instances, are holding their own with those whose reputations are already established. But we fear that this will not be the case for long unless the younger novelists write more clearly and in greater sympathy with the basic facts of humanity.

## Alfred A. Knopf.

FLOYD DELL'S "The Briary Bush" was our best selling novel for 1921. Of course all of Knut Hamsun's books—particularly "Growth of the Soil"—were re-

markably successful, and J. S. Fletcher's detective stories seem to win successively larger audiences as they appear.

2. A pretty close tie between Wilfrid Scawen Blunt's "My Diaries (1888-1914)" and the new revised edition of H. L. Mencken's "The American Language."

4. The outstanding example of an unfairly neglected book on our list was John Russell's "Where the Pavement Ends." You no doubt know the curious history of this book: We published it under the title of "The Red Mark" in 1919. Despite extremely fine reviews the book sold only a few hundred copies. Then last year it was brought out in England under the new title, was widely praised by the English press and became the best seller last summer. Thornton Butterworth, the English publisher, had to print five editions in as many weeks. Thereupon we reset the book, added several stories, and "Where the Pavement Ends" is now one of our best sellers. We have had to print it three times.

5. "Zell," Henry Aikman's novel, published in January of last year. You may remember that H. L. Mencken advertised in *Smart Set* that he would undertake to find a publisher for any deserving manuscript that had gone the round unsuccessfully and which merited publication. Out of the several hundred manuscripts sent him in response to this "Zell" was the only one he found answering the description. Mr. Knopf recognized its unusual quality immediately and as you know the book was very generously treated by the critics and had an excellent sale.

6. In answer to this we simply point to the many American authors whose books we have introduced to the American public—all of them young men, who are building for themselves sound literary reputations. Henry Aikman, Floyd Dell, Thomas Beer, Edward Alden Jewell, Harvey Fergusson, Mazo de la Roche, John V. A. Weaver. The books of these writers go out in goodly quantities, steadily, from our shipping rooms side by side with those of Joseph Hergesheimer, Willa Cather, H. L. Mencken, W. H. Hudson, Clarence Day, Jr., Knut Hamsun and other writers who were established before the war.

## J. B. Lippincott Company.

AS was generally expected, Hall Caine's recent novel, "The Master of Man" proved to be one of the outstanding works of fiction in 1921. It was by far and away our biggest seller, but the satisfaction in publishing it came not alone from the sale but more particularly from the reception which was accorded it by critics and readers.

Among the works of non-fiction it is more difficult for us to select the most popular volume. It is a race between Pennell's "The Whistler Journal" and Faris's "Seeing the Sunny South"—two works totally dissimilar in their nature. We must, however, grant the palm to "The Whistler Journal," as it has created a veritable Niagara of discussion and correspondence. This is due to the great interest in Whistler, whose fame as an artist grows greater every year. "The Journal" and "The Life" form an unusually interesting commentary on the art and literary circles in London and Paris of that time as well as a complete and authorized biography of Whistler.

While Dr. Burris Jenkins's "Princess Salome" enjoyed a fair degree of success, we feel convinced that the public has overlooked the great merits of this novel. It is a remarkable literary achievement as well as a dramatic and powerful story. It presents a view of Bible times and characters that inspire one with totally new ideas of the great world tragedy. Many of the reviewers and writers realized the importance of this work, but for some reason it did not appeal to the fiction readers as we expected it would. It is our sincere belief, however, that it will be classed among the great Biblical novels.

The discovery of the year for us was the remarkable collection of poems, "A Tale of a Walled Town" and Other Verses, which came to our hands in an unusual way from the pen of B-8266, an inmate of a Philadelphia penitentiary. Prof. William Lyon Phelps was so greatly pleased with the volume that he is sponsoring it for the Pulitzer prize in literature. We quote from his letter: "These poems are remarkable for their originality, in their appeal, and considering the circumstances under which they were written. There is genuine poetic imagination." William Stanley Braithwaite says: "Regarding 'The Song of David' and 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol,' nothing ranks between them and the poem, 'A Tale of a Walled Town'—that behind the latter is a long de-

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